

[Mr. MacCurrie on Mussolini]

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January 11, 1939 MR. MACCURREE ON MUSSOLINI, FOREIGNERS, RELIGION, STATE GOVERNMENT, COMPENSATION AND INSURANCE

Sounds from the shower room in the Fire House today indicate that one of the members is enjoying a cherished privilege. Showers in private homes in our town are rare, and one of

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the principal inducements through which the membership list in always subscribed to the limit is the shower and its unlimited supply of hot water. Mr. MacCurrie, who is in his chair by the window, explains as I take a seat beside him, that "Winkoski is cleanin' himself."

Then he observes: "Nice day. This kind of weather keeps up, the winter won't be so bad. Some say it ain't healthy, but dommed if I believe that. Sunshine and warm air is healthier than snow and cold, to my way o' thinkin'.

"Radio says rain tomorrow."

From the shower room Mr. Winkoski calls out: "Don't believe that old Scotchman. He goes by his corns. He never listens to the radio."

Ignoring the interruptions Mr. MacCurrie remarks: "The news today said Mussolini was callin' all the Eyetalians back home. Said he wants 'em from all over the world, from this country and wherever else they've settled.

"It's another one of his bids for attention. He's tryin' to take the play away from Hitler. Them two fellas are like a pair of actors.

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One's jealous of the other one. Mussolini knows goddom well the Eyetalians from this country don't want to go back. Why should they? What's he got to offer them? They won't be such dom fools as all that. A few years ago, he was hollerin' about his country bein' over populated."

Mr. Winkoski appears from behind the rear of the big hook and ladder apparatus tying his necktie. He is a husky young Polish American, employed in the rolling mill part time. There is apparently a good-natured feud between him and Mr. MacCurrie: Says he:

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"They oughta take all you goddom Scotchmen back too. This country could get along fine without you. You get your hands on some dough, right away you salt it in the bank."

Mr. MacCurrie grins, favors as with a sly wink.

"What they ought to do," says he, "is take the goddom Polacks back. You never should've come over here in the first place. Why goddomit if it wasn't for the Scotch, and the English and the Irish, you wouldn't have had any place to come to. And you, Winkoski, you'd have been eatin' cabbage soup six days a week and salt pork on Sunday."

"You take my advice," says Mr. Winkoski, addressing me, "and come up town with me. Don't stay here and listen to him. If he gets on politics he'll talk your arm off at the elbow."

"Go on about your business," says Mr. MacCurrie, "if you've got any."

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As the door closes behind Mr. Winkoski, he says: "He's a pretty good kind of a lad." He reaches for his snuff box, an invariable prelude to conversation. With Mr. MacCurrie, the act of taking snuff is an operation of the most delicate type, requires the utmost concentration, and small talk must be suspended until it is complete.

"I was readin' in the Sunday paper yesterday," he says, "an article sayin' that everything has advanced in the modern world except releegion. Science in particular. Science has gone forward, releegion has stayed where it always was.

"You know, I don't take a great deal of stock in releegion. I could never swallow some o' that stuff in the Bible. Of coorse, I believe there may be a God -- a Supreme Bein' -- some kind of a force which has supreme command over Nature -- but I don't believe much in organized releegion.

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"Look at some of these clergymen. The money they get. What do they do for it? Do any of them practice Christianity? Dom few.

"No, I'm kind of dootful aboot the hereafter. I believe you're a long time dead. If there is anything, I don't think it'll be so bad. Wwy should a Supreme Bein', who should be wiser than any mon make it hard for a mon in the hereafter? It looks to me like everyone gets plenty of hell and domnation right here on earth."

Mr. MacCurrie gazes thoughtfully out of the window for a bit.

"People are goin' through hell right now," he says.

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"Most of them. There's a lot of people here in this town don't know where their next week's pay is comin' from.

"I heard them talkin' on the radio today, aboot relief and one thing or another. They say they're goin' to change the system, and take the politics oot of it, and all that. They may change it all they please but they'll never do away with [it?]. Not unless business picks up to something like it used to be before the depression. The best they can hope for is that business will pick up to where they can shave it doon a little bit.

"Baldwin (Gov. of Conn.) wants the state to handle the work. Him and Sullivan (WPA) reached an agreement, the radio said today. Baldwin seems to have some good ideas, but of coorse you can't tell how the mon will be handicapped. After all he's got to play ball with the politicians. I don't think he's got a very strong veta power. I don't think his veta power is as strong as the president's."

"Well, it's aboot time for my walk. This is too good a kind of a day to be sittin' indoors." Mr. MacCurrie dons coat and hat, and departs, walking at a healthy clip despite his seventy odd years. I am about to leave also, but I see Mr. Richmond climbing up the little incline,

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and I hail him from the open door. He peers myopically in my direction, for since his operation he can see clearly only about three feet ahead. When he finally identifies me, he says: "You still lookin' for information be ye?"

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But his operation is too recent for him to want to discuss anything else. He gives me the details again. Then he says:

"I asked Bevans if I couldn't get compensation. I got hit right near that eye with a spring ring down to the shop some time ago. How long? Oh about ten years, it was. I says to Bevans, I says, 'Where'd you get hit, in the eye?' I says, 'Well, no, but right near it.' He says, 'No that couldn't cause it.'

"But I still think it might have had somethin' to do with it. The dentist had a lot of trouble pullin' my eye tooth. I had to have that out before I could have the operation. It was all rotten, tooth was. That ring might've been responsible for that.

"Well you can't argue with them fellers. I see Sullivan's (a local man) home. Had his leg took off above the knee. First I knew about it was today. I was comin' along Grand St. this mornin' and a feller pulled up in a car and he says, 'Where's Sullivan live?' I says, 'What Sullivan?' He says, 'Sullivan on Center Street.' I says, 'You ain't on Center St.' He says, 'Where is it?' I says, 'You turn around and take the next street to your left and keep goin' till you come to the hill. Sullivan lives in the house on top of the hill.'

"So I take it from that he's home. Don't know who the feller was, insurance man maybe. Like to see the poor devil get compensation.

"My idee is young feller, that everyone drivin' a car should be made to carry insurance. I don't know if the feller that hit Sullivan had insurance or not -- I hope he had. If he didn't

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it's one more reason why this state ought to have a law like Massachusetts. Compulsory insurance. That's what they ought to have, compulsory insurance.”